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ABSTRACT

Leadership is a concept that some school administrators know generally and others specifically. The term takes on new meanings and dimensions every time it is articulated. The tasks of leadership are envisioning goals, affirming values, motivating, managing, achieving workable unity, explaining, serving as a symbol, representing the group, and renewing. Effective two-way communication is essential to proper functioning of leader-constituent interaction. Leaders are preoccupied with the capacity to bring about intended consequences in the behavior of others. Leaders who understand that when high performance is expected its likelihood increases have an important qualification for moral leadership. Fourteen qualities of leaders include courage, confidence, and flexibility. Development of leadership extends over many years. Leaders must motivate people and have skills such as agreement building, networking, exercising nonjurisdictional power, and institution building in order to deal with complex situations. An interview with John W. Gardner is transcribed. (EJS)

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Timothy J. Dyer, Executive Director
Thomas F. Koerner, Associate Executive Director, Editorial Director
Carol A. Bruce, Associate Director of Publications
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Eugenia Cooper Potter, Project Editor

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National Association of Secondary
School Principals
1904 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091
(703) 860-0200

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Introduction

Leadership is a concept that principals and other school administrators know-some generally, others specifically. It is a concept, however, that takes on new meanings and new dimensions every time it is articulated, as it reflects largely the perceptions and experiences of writers.

Reading what the masters write about their subject is always interesting, and we think readers will find this collection of pieces reflecting the thoughts of John W. Gardner very stimulating, even inspiring as they pursue their own leadership styles.

Gardner, U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare from 1965 to 1968, has written extensively about leadership for 25 years. He is a founder of Common Cause and a co-founder of Independent Sector, for whom he directed the Leadership Studies Program. Gardner is now a professor in the Graduate School of Business, Stanford University, Palo Alto, Calif. He is the author of *On Leadership*, published in 1990 by Free Press, which incorporates the Leadership Papers.

This booklet presents an interview with Gardner and a series of passages excerpted from his Leadership Papers and published in the *NASSP Bulletin*, September 1988-May 1989.

Principals and Leadership—An Interview with John Gardner

Koerner: Mr. Gardner, in the past several years, the leadership role of school principals has received a great deal of attention, with most people concluding that principals are essential to having a successful school. What do you think about their role? Is is more leader than manager?

Gardner: I take the view that there's a very substantial overlap between leaders and managers. Not all experts on leadership agree with that, however; some believe leadership's a very special thing. I find in practice a considerable overlap. Leaders tend not only to look far out ahead, but also to look out to the sides more broadly to see the context in which their system is functioning, how it relates to other systems in the environment, to history, and to the economy. Leaders are preoccupied with vision, values, motivation, and renewal. And I think all those things say that the principals are more leaders than managers. If they're doing their job, they're more leaders than managers.

Koerner: What do you mean by renewal?

Gardner: Those managers who have little of the leader in them are apt to take the system as it is, saying: "Here's a machine, I'll turn the crank. I'll run it in the best way I can," whereas the leader with an eye to renewal is constantly saying, "Is the system doing what it's supposed to do? How can I make it do better what it's supposed to do? Have we reexamined the goals of the system?" In other words, leaders ask deeper questions with respect to the evolution of the system when they are interested in renewal.

Koerner: If principals are performing as leaders as you suggest, what should they be doing on a daily basis?

Gardner: Let me introduce my answer by saying that I think principals have a very tough job. It's like a mayor's job. They have very little insulation from the problems. They're right in the midst of their constituents. The cross pressures are tremendous as different people want different things of them and of the system. That is practically a description of the modern dilemma for leaders: multiple constituencies and cross fire. Despite this, I think it is absolutely essential that principals not given in to self-pity, or to feelings of victimization. I've looked at a lot of systems and the ailment is common. When the pressures build, the congressman or whoever says, "My God, I can't handle all this stuff. Everybody is beating on me. What'll I do?" And that's fatal. Principals, like all leaders, must be active, saying, "That's my job. I'm here to deal with the cross pressures." They must deal actively and politically with their problems. Unfortunately the word political has a negative connotation in our society, but we must all be political if we want to adjust the competing pressures by bargaining, mediating, sorting out, persuading, etc. They must fend off the pressures

that they think will damage their system. They have to sell. They have to bargain.

Koerner: The characteristics of leaders can comprise a rather lengthy list, but what do you think are the special characteristics of principals who are effective leaders?

Gardner: I put judgment in action first. Judgment is the capacity to sort out a complex situation and come to the answer that proves to be right. But by judgment in action I mean judgment while people are shouting at you...judgment when the deadlines are short and the stakes are high...the capacity to function under cross pressures.

Another characteristic is communicating persuasively. Principals are leaders who have to deal persuasively with various constituencies. They must convince others of the school's case, etc. Other characteristics are physical vitality; willingness to accept responsibility; capacity to manage, decide, set priorities; flexibility of approach; confidence; skills in dealing with people. The list can go on and on, but these attributes are often associated with leaders, no matter what the specific situation.

Koerner: You say in your publications on leadership that leadership is not necessarily a skill people are born with, rather it is an acquired skill.

Gardner: Absolutely. No doubt there's a portion that is born in you. Energy, for example, cannot be learned. There's probably some little thing that's born in people about wanting to leave their mark on events. But there are very few other things. The amount that is learned is just tremendous. Ronald Reagan is a great communicator, but he spent his whole life learning it. He came by it honestly. Lyndon Johnson wasn't born with the skills to be the Senate majority leader. He learned them.

Koerner: Principals, of course, want to sharpen their leadership skills. How can principals who exercise leadership all the time go about sharpening their skills?

Gardner: Principals live in a learning laboratory. Their job is a learning laboratory for leadership. Every day there's the opportunity to test themselves and, believe me, there is nothing like on-the-job training for leaders. They have daily opportunities to develop skills like persuasiveness, conflict resolution, and consensus building. My advice to principals is they be more conscious and analytical of their leadership skills. Why did it work this time and not the other time?

Koerner: Principals have a diverse constituency — students, parents, teachers, business and government communities. What advice do you have for principals who want to be effective with all these different groups?

Gardner: I think each group presents different problems but I urge your readers not to feel that this is an unbearable burden, even though it sometimes is. They must approach each problem actively, saying, "I'm going to tackle it." With respect to students, principals need to know what builds their morale and what tears it down, so that they can deal with things that bother them.

With respect to teachers, I am convinced that the whole movement toward the devolution of initiative and responsibility — which the most forward-looking corporations are working on — is appropriate. The principals who are in the middle of education's hierarchy, should be working on the whole hierarchy, those above and those below them. They should be a force in advising state education officials not to suck up all the authority to the state

level. It is 180 degrees opposite to what's going on in business.

They should be pushing decisions down to the school district, which in turn should be pushing some decisions down to principals. And if principals can let teachers make some of those decisions, we'll have viable schools. Principals should be aggressive about doing this.

With businesspeople, principals have to make the case of education, for healthy schools. But there's also a public selling job to do. I feel strongly about it because I've done a lot of public selling as you know and I'm pretty good at it. I feel that a principal ought to be able to step up to the nearest microphone or get on the morning talk show and say, "Here's the problem, here's what I'm fighting for, and your kids are going to need it."

Koerner: What you're saying is that principals must be enthusiastic about the organization they represent.

Gardner: Absolutely, and the best way to be enthusiastic is to be enthusiastic about what it can become. There will be days when you can't possibly be enthusiastic about what you see around you, but you can be enthusiastic about what you're trying to get the system to be.

Koerner: Educators sometimes look to industry and business leaders as being the pros in management. Should school administrators develop management models patterned after industry and business?

Gardner: There are many things about industry that are not relevant to schools. At this moment in history, however, participative management is an interesting initiative on the part of business. It was stirred up because the Japanese and the West Ger-

:nans scared the dickens out of us. Industry woke up and said what had we better do? And they discovered that things like quality control, productivity, morale, have to be dealt with locally, not in corporate headquarters. The educational systems must take a page from industry's book. State government offices, the chief state school officer, and the legislature have to recognize that principals know how the system works.

Koerner: In recent years there has been much discussion about the need for principals to have backgrounds as teachers. Can anyone be a successful principal? Or do you think a teaching background is essential?

Gardner: Perhaps it's not essential, but it helps, primarily for credibility. In any field there's a kind of credibility that says "I came up through the ranks." People feel that makes sense. But the plain truth is that most leaders couldn't possibly have all the skills represented among the people they supervise. We have to be content in being an expert in one or two and an amateur in the others. So it's perfectly possible for principals to lead without having come up through teaching.

Koerner: Principals are certified by their states indicating that they have completed a required course of study to be school administrators. Do you think it's possible that one can be trained for leadership in such courses?

Gardner: I believe that you can learn a lot in such courses. For example, knowing how your state system works might take years to figure out. A good professor, however, could show you in a semester how the thing works. Many law schools teach students the basic skills of negotiating. If this skill were left to experience, it would take years to learn.

Law schools also offer a course in advocacy. The answer to your question is that by all means something can be done through courses.

Koerner: Some people believe that schools resist change, that they're not vanguards of innovation. How can principals change that view? How can they be leaders of change without succumbing to every whim and fancy that comes down the pike?

Gardner: Well, first of all, principals live in an atmosphere of change. Something's always happening, and the pressures are such that they can't sit back and enjoy the status quo. The main thing for principals is to have a keen sense of what their school at its healthiest can be, and then fend off the pressures that want to change it in another direction.

The real problem for many leaders today is not the choice between changing and not changing, because change is going to happen. Rather, it's how leaders can choose change that's going in the direction where their vision points. They accept the pressures that move in that direction and keep building a constituency for their vision. They get the parents to know, get the community to know, what the school's going to look like when it's in a healthy condition. They keep recruiting allies out there.

Koerner: You say the school ought to be all that it can be. What do you really think schools ought to be all about?

Gardner: I'm a great believer in basics, in the value of words and numbers, but I've never had the feeling that they exclude other things. For example, I think the school ought to be a community in the sense of having shared values and pride in their collective membership. I believe also that everyone in

John W. Gardner on Leadership.

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the school should have an identity there and not be just a grain of sand in a bucket. Students learn this from teachers who treat them like human beings. In addition, I think most people agree that a good school is where the parents are involved.

Koerner: What do you think is the real challenge today for principals?

Gardner: I think it's the point I made about vision of what a healthy school is and actively embedding that in the minds of the parents, the state school bureaucracy, and the community. I'm for aggressive principals who get out there and sell their goods. The thing I worry about are the cross pressures and dealing with them energetically with a positive view of what we're trying to achieve.

Koerner: Please explain a bit more about what you mean by "cross pressures."

Gardner: When the superintendent says we want better performance but we plan to reduce the budget; when the school board says it wants courses on AIDS prevention and drug abuse, but also wants more attention on the basics, principals experience cross pressures. Most may be legitimate. It isn't a question of bad pressures and good pressures. But choices have to be made. Somebody has to say, "When it's all worked out we want this kind of school." It gets back to vision again.

Koerner: To rally a faculty to giving its full commitment to excellence, what is the single most important thing the principal can do?

Gardner: I guess I believe that the most important single item is morale. I made the point earlier that many people feel victimized by the pressures of their jobs. Teachers especially feel that society is beating

on them. They need help from principals who can lead the way in building respect for them as professionals. Doing that will do wonders for teacher morale.

The second is the devolution of initiative and responsibility to teachers. I feel strongly that teachers should be treated like professionals and have professional duties. By building the teachers' sense of themselves as professionals, principals build the school as a community. This is especially true in urban areas where it's difficult to have a healthy school in a disintegrating neighborhood. We have to make the school the healthiest thing around. We the teachers, we the parents, we the students have to care about each other. We're here every school day and we have to make it work. And that's morale building.

Koerner: The concept of teacher empowerment could upset some school administrators. Are they justified in fearing a loss of leadership in running schools?

Gardner: Devolution starts with the chief state school officer and the state legislature, so that the principals not only give up some authority, but they gain some authority. They get authority from the superintendent they didn't have before. In delegating more to teachers, they in effect will enhance their leadership.

Koerner: At-risk students today require much attention of principals throughout the country. Do you have any thoughts on leadership in this area?

Gardner: I feel that at-risk students are a community responsibility. The problem, however, lies in the lack of communication between the various institutions that serve the community. Youth-serving organizations, churches, and schools just don't con-

nect. Take drug use, for example. It is almost always preceded by a long train of premonitory signs. Perhaps the Girl Scout troop leader first noticed that Mary was having some trouble, but didn't have anybody to tell because she's not in touch with the school. Maybe the English teacher in one of the grades notices that Mary is missing days at school but doesn't have any place to report this. It's very hard to create an early warning system if these institutions aren't in touch with one another. I believe the whole community ought to have an early warning system for kids headed for trouble. It's not an indictment, it's just to pass the word on that you're a little worried about Mary. Alerting others to your observation can help Mary before her problem goes too far. Principals exercising leadership in their communities would be well-advised to connect all the agencies serving youth, formally and informally.

Koerner: Would you say that the principalship is not the place for the weak of heart?

Gardner: Absolutely. I think it is the place for people who can recognize that great opportunities are often brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems.

Principals should not be discouraged about the possibilities of making their case. The scene may look discouraging — it is a big noisy society — but principals have the power to make their case.

September 1988

The Nature of Leadership

Many writers on leadership are at considerable pains to distinguish between leaders and managers. In the process leaders generally end up looking like a cross between Napoleon and the Pied Piper, and managers like unimaginative clods. This troubles me. I once heard it said of a man "He's an utterly first-class manager but there isn't a trace of the leader in him." I am still looking for that man, and I am beginning to believe that he doesn't exist. Every time I encounter an utterly first-class manager he turns out to have quite a lot of the leader in him.

And even the most visionary leader will be faced on occasion with decisions that every manager faces: when to take a short-term loss to achieve a long-term gain, how to allocate scarce resources among important goals, whom to trust with a delicate assignment. So even though it has become conventional to contrast leaders and managers, I am going to use slightly different categories, lumping leaders and leader/managers into one category and placing in the other category those numerous managers whom one would not normally describe as leaders. There are at least six respects in which the leaders and leader/managers distinguish themselves from the general run of managers.

1. They think longer term — beyond the day's crises, beyond the quarterly report, beyond the horizon.

2. They look beyond the unit they are heading and grasp its relationship to larger realities — the larger organization of which they are a part, conditions external to the organizational, global trends.

3. They reach and influence constituents beyond their jurisdictions, beyond boundaries. Thomas Jefferson influenced people all over Europe. Gandhi influenced people all over the world. In an organization, leaders overflow bureaucratic boundaries — often a distinct advantage in a world too complex and tumultuous to be handled "through channels." Their capacity to rise above jurisdictions may enable them to bind together the fragmented constituencies that must work together to solve a problem.

4. They put heavy emphasis on the intangibles of vision, values, and motivation and understand intuitively the non-rational and unconscious elements in the leader-constituent interaction.

5. They have the political skill to cope with the conflicting requirements of multiple constituencies.

6. They think in terms of renewal. The routine manager tends to accept the structure and processes as they exist. The leader or leader/manager seeks the revision of process and structure required by ever-changing reality.

September 1988

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The Tasks of Leadership

Examination of the tasks performed by leaders (gets) to the heart of some of the most interesting questions concerning leadership. I shall deal with nine tasks that seem to be the most significant functions of leadership, but I encourage readers to add to the list. Leadership activities that are implicit in all the tasks (e.g., communicating, relating effectively with people) are not dealt with separately.

1. *Envisioning Goals.* Leaders perform the function of goal setting in diverse ways. Some assert a vision of what the group can be at its best. Other leaders point us toward solutions to our problems. Still others, presiding over internally divided groups, are able to define overarching goals that unify constituencies and focus energies.

2. *Affirming Values.* Not only leaders of the society at large but leaders of organizations and groups must concern themselves with the affirmation of values. They do so not only in verbal pronouncements but in the policy decisions they make, the kinds of people they surround themselves with, and the way they conduct themselves.

3. *Motivating.* Leaders do not normally create motivation out of thin air. They unlock or channel existing motives. They create a climate in which there is pride in making significant contributions to shared goals.

4. *Managing.* Those aspects of leadership that one might describe as managing (are): planning and priority setting; organizing and institution-building; keeping the system functioning; agenda setting and decision making; and exercising political judgment.

5. *Achieving Workable Unity.* Leaders must deal with both external and internal conflict. Today they live in a world of interacting, colliding systems. Under the circumstances, all our leaders must spend part of their time building community, dealing with polarization, creating loyalty to the larger venture.

6. *Explaining.* Leaders teach. Teaching and leading are distinguishable occupations, but every great leader is clearly teaching — and every great teacher is leading.

7. *Serving as a Symbol.* The leader is inevitably a symbol...of management.

8. *Representing the Group.* A distinctive characteristic of the ablest leaders is that they do not shrink from external representation. They see the long-term needs and goals of their constituency in the broadest context, and they act accordingly.

9. *Renewing.* We are buffeted by events over which we have no control, and change will occur. The question is, will it be the kind of change that will preserve our deepest values, enhance the vitality of the systems, and ensure its future?

So much for the tasks of leadership. Any attempt to describe a social process as complex as leadership inevitably makes it seem more orderly than it is. Leadership is not tidy. Decisions are made and then revised or reversed. Misunderstandings are frequent, inconsistency inevitable. Achieving a goal may simply make the next goal more urgent: Inside every solution are the seeds of new problems.

October 1988

Leader-Constituent Interaction

The relationship between leaders and followers varies according to whether the organization or group is in a period of calm or crisis, in prosperity or recession, on a steep growth curve or stagnating. I cannot hope to deal with all the variations, but shall attempt to suggest the key features of the relationship.

Leaders are almost never as much in charge as they are pictured to be, followers almost never as submissive as one might imagine. Influence and pressure flow both ways. It is this reciprocal aspect of leader-constituent interaction that underlies one of the soundest of political maxims: good constituents produce good leaders. They not only select good ones, they make them better by holding them to standards of performance. Good leaders, for their part, are not blindly reactive. They select what they will react to, drawing impulses from various parts of their constituency and then charting a course that bears the stamp of their own perceptions and judgment.

One generalization that is supported both by research and experience is that effective two-way communication is essential to proper functioning of the leader-follower relationship. (But) there is more to face-to-face communication than the verbal component. The leader's style, timing, and symbolic acts all carry messages — and demonstrate that messages are being received. Words and sentences, tone of voice, body language, facial expression, tim-

ing, unfinished sentences, silences — all contribute to a multi-level dialog.

Truly gifted leaders know not only what constituents need but what they fear, what they long to be, what they like best about themselves.

Leaders develop their styles as they interact with their constituencies. They must not only forge bonds of trust between themselves and their constituents, they must create a climate of trust throughout the system over which they preside. Trust is not the only glue that holds a human group together, but when it dissolves, the capacity of the group to function effectively is seriously impaired.

One of the most important prerequisites for trust in a leader is steadiness. A leader who is inconsistent and unpredictable poses a nerve-wracking problem for followers. Another requirement is fairness — fairness when the issues are being openly adjudicated but, equally important, fairness in the back room.

Perhaps the most promising trend in our thinking about leadership is the growing conviction that the purposes of the group are best served when the leader helps followers to develop their own initiative, strengthens them in the use of their own judgment, enables them to grow and to become better contributors. Some individuals who have dazzling powers of personal leadership not only fail to build institutional strength but create dependency in those below them. They leave behind a weakened organization staffed by weakened people. In contrast, leaders who strengthen their people and have a gift for institution-building may create a legacy that will last for a very long time.

November 1988

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Leadership and Power

Power is not to be confused with status or prestige. It is the capacity to ensure the outcomes one wishes and to prevent those one does not wish.

In this country — and in most other democracies — power has such a bad name that many good people persuade themselves they want nothing to do with it. The ethical and spiritual apprehensions are understandable. But one cannot abjure power.

Power as we are now speaking of it — power in the social dimension — is simply the capacity to bring about certain intended consequences in the behavior of others. Parents have power. So do teachers, policemen, foremen, middle-level executives, all by virtue of their position. Others have power by virtue of intrinsic qualities — persuasiveness, beauty, leadership gifts.

It is necessary to distinguish between leaders and powerholders. By definition, leaders always have a measure of power. But many powerholders have no trace of leadership. The air traffic controller, the tax assessor, the policeman on his beat, the loan officer in a bank, the headwaiter — each has power in some degree, but not necessarily the qualities of leadership.

To say a leader is preoccupied with power is like saying that a tennis player is preoccupied with making shots his opponent cannot return. Of course leaders are preoccupied with power! *The significant questions are: What means do they use to gain it? How do*

they exercise it? To what ends do they exercise it?

When Jane Addams founded Hull House to serve the immigrant poor in the Chicago slums she created for herself a position of power, but the means and the ends were so admirable that she was universally admired. Hitler used treachery and intimidation to achieve power to the end that he might enslave the German people, exterminate Jews, and crush the nations of Europe.

There are types of powerholders for whom there is no "end" other than power itself. The sheer pleasure of dominating is the object of the exercise. We have learned neither to admire nor trust such people.

One must admit that we tend to overemphasize the part played by leaders. A leader is an individual who fills a role in a social system (organization, community, nation). Outcomes for the system depend in some measure upon the leader, but also upon leader-constituent interaction, the interplay among various groups of constituents, and environmental and historical forces.

In short, one can accept a diminished emphasis on the role of leader. But to imagine that the society can be run without leaders is misguided.

December 1988

23

The Moral Aspect of Leadership

What does a "good" leader look like — a leader who meets acceptable ethical and moral standards? Such matters are, in some measure, prescribed by the culture, so let us limit ourselves to asking what Americans consider to be acceptable patterns of leadership. It is not an easy question to answer. Some Americans despise any and all leaders; other Americans voluntarily join cults in which submersion of individuality and coercion are the role. Most of us want leaders who are not hungry for power, but some critics say we have created a system in which only the most power-hungry will stay the course. We want leaders who will serve the common good and at the same time serve our special interests, whatever those may be. We dislike paternalism but we love father figures. We bemoan the lack of leadership but we do not treat our leaders very well.

Reviewing the enlivening themes that run through our history as a people, one is struck with the depth and continuity of our commitment to the fulfillment of human possibilities. The leaders we have valued the most have reflected that commitment. There is nothing more crucial to the renewal of a social system than the effectiveness and capacity, the quality and vitality of the human beings flowing into the system. These are chiefly the young people coming out of our schools and colleges to take their place in the adult world. They will be the creators of our future.

Teachers and leaders share a trade secret — that when they expect high performance of their charges, they increase the likelihood of high performance. I remember a teacher of physically handicapped children who said to me, "It is a sin to ask too little of these children. If we ask too little of them, they will ask too little of themselves. They have to ask a lot of themselves."

High expectations, then — of all our young people. That means standards. That means a respect for excellence. Our educational system is preeminently the instrument through which we express our expectations. May the expectations never diminish! Obviously the goal is not an indiscriminate cultivation of all human capacities, but individual fulfillment within a moral framework.

Leaders who understand all of that and guide themselves by it have one of the most important qualifications for moral leadership in our society. They have faith in human possibilities, and that faith communicates itself to followers with powerful effect. My performance is influenced by what others expect of me. If you believe in me, it is easier for me to believe in myself. In the conventional mode people want to know whether the followers believe in the leader; a more searching question is whether the leader believes in the followers.

January 1989

25

Attributes and Context

What qualities do leaders have that the rest of us do not have? There are no traits that will guarantee successful leadership in all situations. Leadership is not absolutely "situation specific," as the researchers would put it. The probability is greater than chance that leaders in one situation will be leaders in another situation. The attributes that follow are not present in every leader. The importance of the attribute to effective leadership will vary with the situation.

1. *Physical vitality and stamina.*

2. *Intelligence and judgment-in-action.* Judgment is the ability to combine hard data, questionable data, and intuitive guesses to arrive at a conclusion that events prove to be correct. Judgment-in-action includes effective problem solving, the design of strategies, the setting of priorities, intuitive as well as rational judgments. Most important, perhaps, it includes the capacity to appraise the potentialities of co-workers (and opponents).

3. *Willingness (eagerness) to accept responsibility.*

4. *Task competence.* Top level leaders cannot hope to have competence in more than a few of the matters under their jurisdiction, but they must have knowledge of the whole system over which they preside, its mission, and the environment in which it functions.

5. *Understanding of followers/constituents and their needs.*

6. *Skill in dealing with people.*

7. *Need to achieve.*

8. *Capacity to motivate.* More than any other attribute, this is close to the heart of the popular con-

ception of leadership — the capacity to move people to action, to communicate persuasively, to strengthen the confidence of followers.

9. *Courage, resolution, steadiness.* Clearly a leader needs courage — not just bravery of the moment but courage over time, not just willingness to risk but to risk again and again, to function well under prolonged stress, to survive defeat and keep going.

10. *Capacity to win and hold trust.*

11. *Capacity to manage, decide, set priorities.*

12. *Confidence.* It requires confidence to take the risks that leaders take. And finally, it takes confidence to handle the criticism and hostility that leaders must absorb.

13. *Ascendance, dominance, assertiveness.* The individuals who achieve in leadership roles are apt to have a fairly strong impulse to take charge. Their assertiveness doesn't necessarily conform to the stereotype of the visibly forceful leader — some are quiet and unspectacular — but whatever their outward style, their inner impulse is to leave their thumbprint on events.

14. *Adaptability, flexibility of approach.*

Available research suggests other important attributes. But the above items surely rank among the most important. The attributes required of a leader depend upon the kind of leadership being exercised, the context, the nature of followers, and so on.

February 1989

Leadership Development

Can leadership be learned? Many intelligent people say "absolutely not!" But the notion that all the attributes of a leader are innate is demonstrably false. No doubt certain characteristics are genetically determined — level of energy, for example. But the individual's hereditary gifts, however notable, leave the issue of future leadership performance undecided.

Leadership development is a process that extends over many years. We cannot design an assessment procedure that will yield at age 20 or 30 an adequately predictive leadership aptitude score. Nor can we expect our graduate and professional schools to send their graduates out with all their future greatness pre-packaged. One can pre-package a good deal, but the future will bring what it brings.

If one had to name a single, all-purpose instrument of leadership it would be communication. Young potential leaders should gain exceptional command — in both writing and speaking — of their own language and, in an interdependent world, workable knowledge of a second language. Many academic people would regard a course built around public speaking and debating as a trivial approach to leadership, but the plain truth is that most bright young people are poor speakers. If [this] discussion of college-level courses is anywhere near the mark, then the stranger who appears on campus to ask "Who is teaching leadership here?" would have to be told, "A substantial portion of the faculty is teaching it!"

The chairman of a large and famous corporation once said to me, "We recruit young people fresh

out of college, and for thirty years we reward them for keeping their noses to the grindstone, doing their narrow jobs unquestioningly. Then when a top post opens up, we look around in frustration and say 'Where are the statesmen?' " It is equally easy — without anyone intending it — for the organizational culture to allow those with opportunistic, "careerist" motivations to get through the gate ahead of those most sincerely committed to the group. I asked a friend about selection and advancement of leaders in a particular minority group organization, and he said, "The flashy ones get there first."

Industry and the military services spend large sums on special leadership development programs, create centers for advanced training, and send their people to universities for graduate degrees. But where leadership development is the goal, the most effective arena for personal growth continues to be the workplace. If they are to be leaders they must come to know how other workers feel about their jobs, how they regard those above them in the hierarchy, what motivates them, what lifts their morale and what lowers it. For all of that, the workplace is a learning laboratory.

March 1989

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The Task of Motivating

The world is moved by highly motivated people — people who believe very strongly or want something very much. Such people can get out of hand: we are familiar with the excesses born of fanaticism, hatred, greed, and lust for power. But no human venture will succeed without highly motivated men and women.

The tasks of the leader with respect to motivation are many and varied. Among other things, a leader must recognize the needs of followers or constituents, help them see how those needs can be met, and given them confidence that they can accomplish that result through their own efforts.

The small work group fills important social and emotional needs, and such groups develop attitudes and norms that affect productivity, morale, and quality of product. It is now generally agreed that these realities must be recognized and dealt with if a highly motivated work force is to be achieved. Individuals need acceptance, identity, a sense of belonging. If their pride, dignity, or self-esteem is undermined, they are less effective workers. Their participation in decisions on the setting of goals, the assignment of tasks, and the like heightens productivity. To the degree that workers have a sense of involvement, their jobs have more meaning and they are more likely to feel personal responsibility for a good outcome. Similarly, feedback on performance can heighten motivation.

Any athlete or coach can testify to the importance of confidence, which is after all one kind of attitude toward the future. When an athlete says he has "psyched" himself up for a contest he means that

he has coached himself in certain positive expectations.

Harlan Cleveland points out that the leader has little choice but to be optimistic. The analyst, the critic, the journalist can afford not to be. But taking a positive view is not something that effective leaders have to work at: it is in their temperament, and no doubt had much to do with their attainment of a leadership role.

Leaders must help people believe that they can be effective, that their goals are possible of accomplishment, that there is a better future that they can move toward through their own efforts. An employee of the John Deere Company said of Bill Hewitt, then the chief executive officer, "He made us realize how good we were."

The annals of management are filled with tales of the vigorous leader who moves in to head a moribund unit and turns it into a lively group without resorting to any change in personnel. It is not uncommon that inside a mediocre performer is an excellent performer awaiting liberation.

April 1989

The Changing Nature of Leadership

The first thing that strikes one as characteristic of contemporary leadership is the necessity for the leader to work with and through extremely complex organized systems and institutions. . . . Business leaders must understand how our political system works. Political leaders must understand our economic system.

Leaders who rise sufficiently high in their particular system will inevitably find themselves coping with all of the great institutional systems that hold our society together — the legal system, politics and government, the economic system, the media, and so on.

What particular leadership skills are required to deal with the kind of fragmented world described, an independent world where managing interconnectedness is the basic task?

First of all, of course, we need leaders who understand the kind of world it is and have some acquaintance with the systems other than their own with which they must work. Leaders must look beyond the systems they are heading and grasp the relationship to larger realities. Second, leaders must have the skills required to function in such a world. Without proposing a definitive list, I shall mention four.

Agreement-building: Leaders must have skills in conflict resolution in mediation, in compromise, in coalition-building. The capacity to build trust is essential to these activities, as are judgment and the

political skills to deal with multiple constituencies.

Networking: Leaders must be skilled in creating or recreating the linkages necessary to get things done.

Exercising non-jurisdictional power: The new leaders will find that the power of their institutional position simply will not be decisive. They must know how to exercise the other legitimate forms of power — the power of the media and of public opinion, the power of ideas, the power that accrues to those who really understand how the system works, and perhaps above all the power available to anyone skilled in the arts of leadership.

Institution-building: With problems so much more complex than they used to be, the leader's untutored good judgment no longer suffices. Even highly educated judgment no longer suffices. So we construct systems, build problem-solving capability into them, and then choose leaders who can preside over the systems. Micromanagement is not the function of leaders. The task of leaders is to have a sense of where the whole system should be going and to institutionalize the problem solving that will get it there. And the pace of change is such that they will find themselves constantly rebuilding to meet altered circumstances.

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